

Message Text

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O R 160106Z APR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
INFO USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY BONN
USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 097559

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, AWACS, IT

SUBJECT: NATO AWACS AND VISIT OF ITALIAN MOD TO US

REFS: (A) USNATO 514, DTG 172203Z JAN 78
(B) ROME 856, DTG 161610Z JAN 78
(C) ROME 6203, DTG 041815Z APR 78

1. REF A RECOMMENDS A DIRECT APPROACH FROM SECRETARY
OF DEFENSE BROWN TO ITALIAN MOD RUFFINI ON SUBJECT OF
ITALIAN PARTICIPATION -- IN NATO AWACS. REF B REPORTS
SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCH AN APPROACH FROM ITALIAN OFFICIALS.
REF C PROVIDES EXTREMELY HELPFUL COMMENTARY ON ITALIAN
BUDGETARY SITUATION AND POSSIBILITY OF ITALIAN
PARLIAMENTARY ENDORSEMENT OF AWACS AS A DISCRETE
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PROGRAM ADDITIONAL TO THOSE ALREADY APPROVED IN THE
PROMOTIONAL LAWS. WE AGREE THAT WE MUST CONTINUE TO
PRESS THE GOI ON AWACS, AND ENDORSE THE PROPOSALS FOR
EMBASSY INITIATIVES CONTAINED IN PARA 3 REF C. THE
FOLLOWING LETTER FROM SECRETARY BROWN TO MOD RUFFINI
PROPOSES A DEFERRAL OF THE BULK OF THE ITALIAN
CONTRIBUTION UNTIL 1984 AND BEYOND. THE EMBASSY

PRESENTATION COULD ACCOMPANY DELIVERY. THE LETTER TO MINISTER RUFFINI ALSO INVITES HIM TO VISIT WASHINGTON IN LATE SUMMER OR EARLY AUTUMN.

2. BECAUSE OF THEIR LENGTH, WE ARE NOT TRANSMITTING VIA THIS MESSAGE THE ATTACHMENTS TO THE BROWN LETTER; THESE WILL BE DELIVERED WITH SIGNED COPIES TO ITALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON ON APRIL 17. PLEASE SO ADVISE MINISTER RUFFINI. WE ARE ALSO POUCHING A COPY OF THE COMPLETE PACKAGE TO EMBASSY ROME.

3. PLEASE DELIVER FOLLOWING LETTER FROM SECDEF TO RUFFINI, SIGNED APRIL 15, 1978.

BEGIN TEXT

THE HONORABLE ATTILIO RUFFINI
MINISTER OF DEFENSE
MINSTRO DELLA DIFESA
VIA 20 SETTEMBRE
ROME, ITALY

DEAR MR. MINISTER:

I AM PLEASED THAT WE WILL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR CONTINUED LEADERSHIP AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE. LET ME
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ALSO EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT YOU AND MRS. RUFFINI CAN BE MY GUESTS IN THE UNITED STATES, AS WE HAD PREVIOUSLY PLANNED. THE NEXT FEW MONTHS PROMISE TO BE UNUSUALLY BUSY, AND YOU AND I WILL BE SEEING EACH OTHER AT NATO MEETINGS, SO PERHAPS WE CAN PLAN THE VISIT FOR LATE SUMMER OR EARLY FALL. IF YOU COULD SUGGEST A DATE THAT WILL BE CONVENIENT FOR YOU, OUR STAFFS COULD THEN PROCEED WITH SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS.

LET ME HERE RAISE ONE ITEM OF IMPORTANT BUSINESS WHICH CANNOT WAIT. THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN US AS TO THE MILITARY IMPORTANCE OF AWACS. IF WE FAIL TO PROVIDE FOR NATO AWACS, THE ALLIANCE WILL BE HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO LOW-LEVEL AIR ATTACK AND MANY OF OUR OTHER FORCE IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE WASTED. FOR FIVE YEARS THE ALLIANCE HAS BEEN NEGOTIATING ABOUT THIS LONG OVERDUE STEP. IN MY VIEW THE COMPREHENSIVE NATO AWACS PROGRAM PACKAGE NOW REFERRED TO GOVERNMENTS CONTAINS ALL THE ELEMENTS NEEDED FOR THE ALLIANCE TO APPROVE THE PROGRAM.

UNFORTUNATELY ITALY'S FAILURE TO APPROVE ITS SHARE

COULD CAUSE FAILURE OF THE ENTIRE ENTERPRISE. I
UNDERSTAND THE ECONOMIC AND BUDGETARY SITUATION

WHICH HAS LED YOU TO LIMIT ITALIAN PARTICIPATION
TO A SYMBOLIC CONTRIBUTION. HOWEVER, IT WILL BE
DIFFICULT INDEED TO EXPLAIN TO THE PARLIAMENTS AND
PUBLICS OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS WHY ITALIAN PARTICIPATION
IS ONLY 1 MILLION DOLLARS.

AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCGIFFERT POINTED OUT TO SENATOR
PASTORINO IN HIS LETTER OF FEBRUARY 7, AN ALTERNATIVE
WOULD BE FOR ITALY TO PLEDGE TO MAKE HER FULL
CONTRIBUTION TO NATO AWACS PROCUREMENT BUT NOT UNTIL
HER ECONOMIC SITUATION IMPROVES. IN THE INTERIM,
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ITALY COULD MAKE A SMALL, BUT POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT
CONTRIBUTION WHICH WOULD ENSURE AWACS COVERAGE
FOR ITALY. SOME 4-6 MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY
DURING THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WOULD COVER THE ITALIAN
SHARE OF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, GROUND INTERFACE,
AND A FORWARD OPERATING BASE IN ITALY, MOST OF WHICH
WOULD BE SPENT IN ITALY. (I ATTACH ONE POSSIBLE
PAYMENTS SCHEDULE AS WELL AS A BRIEF ON ECONOMIC
BENEFITS FOR ITALY.) WITH A DEFENSE BUDGET WELL OVER
4 BILLION DOLLARS PER ANNUM SURELY ITALY CAN FIND
4-6 MILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY FOR A PROJECT OF SUCH
IMPORTANCE.

I ALSO ENCLOSE A RECENTLY COMPLETED USAF STUDY OF
THE CONTRIBUTION AWACS CAN MAKE TO THE AIR DEFENSE
OF THE SOUTHERN FLANK. THE STUDY WILL MAKE CLEAR,
I BELIEVE, THE IMPRESSIVE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY
OF AWACS AS DIRECTLY APPLIED TO THE AREA OF MOST
INTEREST TO ITALY.

WARM REGARDS.

SINCERELY,

(SIGNED) HAROLD BROWN CHRISTOPHER

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